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NICARAGUAN REBELS REPORTEDLY 'FOOL' CIA ON PURGE
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WASHINGTON (AP) - REAGAN ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS SAY THE LIMITS OF CIA CONTROL OVER THE REBELS IT BACKS IN NICARAGUA HAVE BEEN MADE EVIDENT BY HONDURAS' CHARGES THAT THE REBELS HAVE MURDERED POLITICAL DISSIDENTS IN HONDURAS.

THE OFFICIALS, WHO INSISTED ON ANONYMITY, SAID THE HONDURAN ALLEGATIONS CAUGHT THE CIA OFF GUARD. THEY SAID REBEL LEADERS HAD ASSURED THE CIA THAT A KEY MILITARY OFFICER ALLEGEDLY IMPLICATED IN THE ABUSES HAD BEEN EXPELLED TWO YEARS AGO FROM THE NICARAGUAN DEMOCRATIC FORCE.

THE U.S.-BACKED FORCE, KNOWN IN NICARAGUA BY ITS SPANISH INITIALS, FDN, HAS BEEN FIGHTING FOR FOUR YEARS TO OVERTHROW THE LEFTIST SANDANISTA GOVERNMENT IN NICARAGUA.

U.S. OFFICIALS EXPRESSED SURPRISE LAST WEEK WHEN INFORMED THAT, ACCORDING TO STATEMENTS FROM TWO REBEL LEADERS, THE OFFICER, COL. RICARDO 'CHINO' LAU, HAD NOT BEEN PURGED BUT AT LEAST UNTIL LAST YEAR WAS STILL WITH THE REBEL GROUP.

'IF LAU WAS THERE AFTER JANUARY 1983, IT WAS CLEARLY DECEPTIVE,' SAID ONE OFFICIAL FAMILIAR WITH U.S. EFFORTS TO RID THE FDN OF LAU AND OTHER NATIONAL GUARD OFFICERS WHO FOUGHT FOR LONGTIME DICTATOR ANASTASIO SOMOZA BEFORE HIS OVERTHROW IN 1979.

THE OFFICIAL SAID FDN LEADERS, OPPOSED TO THE PURGE, APPARENTLY DECIDED TO 'FOOL THE GRINGOS' BY SHIFTING LAU FROM A PUBLIC TO A SECRET POSITION.

ANOTHER OFFICIAL SAID THE INCIDENT SHOWED THAT WHILE THE CIA HAD DIRECT COMMAND AND CONTROL OVER CERTAIN OPERATIONS, SUCH AS THE MINING OF NICARAGUA'S HARBORS, THE AGENCY HAD ONLY LIMITED INFLUENCE OVER THE FDN'S INTERNAL OPERATIONS.

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, EDGAR CHAMORRO, FORMER FDN PROPAGANDA CHIEF, SAID LAU WAS NEVER OUSTED FROM THE REBEL GROUP, AS THE CIA WAS TOLD, BUT WAS SIMPLY MOVED FROM HIS POST AS THE FDN'S INTELLIGENCE OFFICER TO HEAD OF THE REBELS' COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE UNIT.

CHAMORRO SAID HE BELIEVED LAU'S CONTINUED PRESENCE WAS KNOWN TO SOME CIA PERSONNEL IN THE FIELD, DESPITE CLAIMS FROM ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON THAT THEY THOUGHT LAU HAD BEEN PURGED. LAU'S CURRENT WHEREABOUTS COULD NOT BE ASCERTAINED, AND CIA SPOKESMAN GEORGE LAUDER REFUSED TO DISCUSS THE MATTER.

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